

DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION

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September 1, 1994



Victor Pacheco
Bay Delta Oversight Council
1416 Ninth Street
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

Subject: DRAFT Briefing Paper: Impact of Outdoor Recreation on the Levees and Natural Resources of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

Dear Mr. Pacheco:

Thank you for sending me a copy of the Draft Report. I have attached a number of comments that speak to corrections, omissions, etc. The following are more general comments.

Land-Water Interface

Regarding how to protect the levees, the Commission's research has shown that there are not a lot of places for boaters to reach the land. Suggestions have been made that creation of destination spots, accessible only by water (with servicing by land), and construction of docks would enhance the land-water interface, and lessen trespass and other conflicts when boaters assume the levees are available for public access. The destination spots could be picnic areas, areas designated for water-skiing and jetskiing, or campgrounds.

Docks could be constructed to allow access to the Delta towns, and the services located therein, at restaurants and historic sites.

Permitting

Permitting has traditionally been a stumbling block in developing any new facilities in the waterways; streamlining the permit process has been identified as a crucial need in the Delta.

On the other hand, there is a real problem in the Delta of unauthorized construction in the waterways and on some of the channel islands. Neither the Corps of Engineers; State Lands Commission, nor the Counties are able to actively inspect and abate these violations. This construction precludes use of some areas by the public and adversely impacts wildlife habitat areas.

Vessel Use

As the overall number of vessels in the Delta continues to increase, and as certain areas become more heavily used, it will be important to review the capacity of the various waterways for different types of boating activities.

Land Access

Regarding land access, there seems to be a lack of clarity about the responsibility and authority of the various landowners, reclamation districts, counties, and other entities about who can require or allow what, where, and who will and/or has the staffing to enforce anything. I support the concept of tucking improved access into other, larger projects, such as at the Cross Channel which is now used informally for fishing, but has no support facilities.

Such improvements must be made with the support of the local community, must not increase conflicts with agricultural uses, and must be "in the right spot", e.g. fishing access where fish are, not where a parking space can be located.

One of the ideas developed in studying recreation in the Delta is that most of the pressure for recreation is coming from the areas outside the Delta. It would be appropriate to locate most recreation and access improvements on the outside edge of the Delta, near major access roads and away from the core Delta which is agriculture and wildlife habitat.

Consideration should be given to dedicating a small portion of the lands acquired and managed for fish and wildlife habitat to recreation. In particular, facilities not currently available--picnic tables, nature trails, etc, would go a long way to balancing recreational needs. Sites already acquired and proposed for wildlife habitat enhancement include: Cosumnes Preserve, Stone Lakes Wildlife Refuge, Yolo Bypass Restoration, Twitchell Island, and Sherman Island. I do not believe there is a need for additional acquisition of agricultural lands for recreation. I think lands already in public or quasi-public ownership should be better managed to provide recreation/access opportunities.

Safety and Patrol

Again, your highlighting the lack of adequate funding for patrol and the need for law enforcement must be underscored. There are problems with vessel operation and safety, sanitation/water quality violations, fish and wildlife poaching violations, littering/dumping, inappropriate parking, trespass, etc. Landowners need to know if the Counties and other law enforcement agencies are going to be able to provide adequate protection. Will the landowners have to resort to hiring security guards and patrols in order to feel protected? These

are also important issues to consider before providing areas that invite additional persons into the Delta area, that direct visitors to one location over another, or that concentrate large numbers of persons in one area.

New Development in Outer Delta

The outer edges of the legal Delta (the Secondary Zone) are designated by Counties and Cities as future growth areas. Appropriate development to support recreational use should be included in these areas. Improvements could include: fishing access areas; fishing piers; bike path; equestrian trails; nature walks; jogging paths; overlooks; picnic areas; car-top boat launching areas; beaches; swimming access; and others.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Margit Aramburu".

Margit Aramburu
Executive Director

Attachment

cc: Chairman Torlakson